

GREENE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
James W. Parham Central Office Complex
April 16, 2019 – Called Meeting Minutes

The Greene County Board of Education met in Called session Tuesday, April 16, 2019, at 5:30p.m., at the James W. Parham Central Office Complex.

Chairman Rick Tipton called the meeting to order and noted that all Board members were present. The pledge was led by Tom Cobble and Nathan Brown led the Invocation.

III. Presentations

-Request to Appear Before the Board – Paul Burkey – Impact of School Consolidation Plan – Mr. Paul Burkey noted that he sent in an open letter about the impacts of school consolidation. He said he wanted to make sure we had ideas to consider besides the status quo and Cooperative Strategies' recommendations and would like to identify some options that preserve community schooling while reducing facilities burden and adjusting the class sizes to be more even through re-districting; Hope that the Board has asked the Budget and Finance to cost out some of the options as they prepare for this deliberation; Community schooling is a little more expensive but encourage the Board to look to see if it is worth it; suggests to prioritize toward streamline management positions to keep classroom teachers; fear that a vote for consolidation is embracing our diminished circumstances and managing these new lower expectations that we see in the numbers right now and consolidation will have immediate ramifications; On behalf of the Glenwood community, he would urge the Board to consider keeping the county schools connected to the communities they serve.

IV. New Business

- A. Discussion and possible vote on the Recommendation/Recommendations made by Cooperative Strategies at the Board Workshop on March 7, 2019; as well as, the impact on school zones. (IV-A)

On motion Made by Tom Cobble Seconded by Brian Wilhoit
Vote: 4 – 3 Yes-Brown, Cobble, Justis, Wilhoit; No-Banks, Holt, Tipton

Discussion: Vice-Chairman, Nathan Brown asked Mr. McLain if they were able to get confirmation on the budget numbers during their recent Fiscal meeting; David McLain noted that the ADM (Average Daily Membership) dropped from 6,404 to 6,279 which decreased the budget \$407,159.00; we are 108 teaching positions

above what the BEP pays for; the preliminary budget shows us at a deficit of \$1.4 to \$1.42; we were not aware until today that there is an increase in TCRS which adds \$70,000-\$100,00 to the expense; Clark Justis asked what kind of tax increase it would take to go to the County Commission to cover this kind of deficit, Mr. McLain stated that it would take about \$.20 and this would have to be shared with the City system; Brian Wilhoit asked what the initial saving would be with the first step of the recommendation from Cooperative Strategies-David McLain noted that the BEP gap for the allotment of professional positions would become smaller as opposed to the gap continuing to grow, so the savings would be \$1.3-\$1.4 in closing Glenwood and West Pines; Michelle Holt asked to clarify that the positions would cover the deficit; David McLain confirmed that it would; she also asked what would happen to the administrative position at the schools; Mr. McLain noted that we would be able to absorb the administrative positions and most all of the other positions; Minnie Banks asked if we have looked at other schools-David McLain noted that those two schools are the smallest (enrollment around 150 each) and it makes it easier to absorb the students into the system and we have looked at other schools; Minnie Banks agreed that these are the two smallest schools but structurally, they are in good shape; Mr. McLain responded that they are and added that we have built one school in 38 years and most were built in the 60's; oldest structure is Baileyton built in 1939 and CDMS was built in 1959; Minnie Banks stated that Cooperative Strategies had initially recommended that we close CDMS and we will have to spend nearly a million dollars in renovations at that building to keep it up and it has a lot of structural problems; Michelle asked if CDMS was now at capacity; David McLain noted that the enrollment is at capacity and the enrollment is projected to go down due to birth rates in K-5 and noted that we have much lower enrollment (410-420) than the graduating classes (540) and we are homeschooling 543 kids in this district as well.

Nathan Brown added that if we are not growing in our communities we are dying which is a sad fact of what we have had in Greene County; this is not our fault nor is the communities fault; we want to be able to move Greene County forward; the former plan failed and the community was not behind it and now we are looking at Cooperative Strategies' back up plan; we are fooling ourselves and must acknowledge that we cannot support 17 schools any longer and if we don't do something, this may not be the best plan and we need to figure this out together and it is not going to just stop here and will not fix itself; Brian Wilhoit stated that the trend continues downward with the number of students; Michelle Holt noted that we have lost 1,100 kids in the last 10 years; Mr. McLain added that birth rates in 2000 were at 781 and in 2012 were at 601; we are trying to run things like we did 10 years ago; the State of Tennessee funds us on the Average Daily Membership (number of students) and not on how many schools we have; it is funding formula and not a spending formula; we also need to have equality of sales tax distribution

for City and County Schools; Several parents made spontaneous, opposing comments from the floor and were willing to have property taxes raised to keep the schools open; Chairman Rick Tipton said that until the funding body (County Commission) agrees to help us to fund the schools, we cannot continue like we are and if we decide to hold off tonight and go to the County Commission and they vote not to fund our schools, then we would have to wait to make a decision in August; Parents spoke out and asked why no one came out and talked with them and told them about this; Chairman Tipton noted that we have had community meetings for two and half years, it has been on the radio and in the newspaper and we have given everyone a chance to come out and everything has been posted on "My Greeneville" so nothing has been a secret and now we are here; Minnie Banks added that this has been hard for everyone and we all want to keep the small community schools and noted that we a huge drug problem in Greene County and said it is not going to go away and probably putting all the kids together in the middle schools is not the answer and if we can come together as a community and find more money we might be better off but we don't have the money to keep all of the schools open and it going to progressively get worse and something is going to have to get cut; Chairman Tipton reminded everyone that the only motion on the floor to vote on right now is the recommendation from Cooperative Strategies. Michelle Holt asked if we have roll over money that we could use; David McLain responded that the roll over money has been used for technology and capital projects to try to keep things going; we try to roll over \$800,000 to a million and we do not know how that is going to end this year and it hard to tell each year and last year we had to use \$900,000; Nathan Brown said that we did use to have a line item for the maintenance of our buildings to keep from raising taxes and then 10-15 years ago we started cutting budget lines from maintenance and we do this year after year and you cannot continue to keep up 17 buildings without funding and maybe we should have been asking the County Commission all along for money to fund our schools; Clark Justis added that in the 49 years he has been associated with Greene County that he can count on one hand, or less, the times that the County Commission has helped fund the County schools more than the very minimum; Rick Tipton added that we have been told No by the Commission for years and if we hold off on this and go to the Commission and possibly get the \$.20-then what happens next year, then the schools will have to go through this again and we have done that for eight years; Michelle Holt added that it still isn't too late and we could dip in to the fund balance for one more year and go ask the County Commission; Chairman Tipton and Vice-Chairman Brown both stated that they would not be in support of doing that; Minnie Banks asked again if we could look at CDMS and leave the kids at West Pines and Glenwood; Chairman Tipton responded that would only move the burden to someone else and not fix Greene

County Schools; Ms. Holt asked if we could find \$1.5 this year to cover (from fund balance or other areas) and go ask the County Commission for funding; she noted that the Board had voted this year to provide technology out of capital outlay and she wants out kids to have the iPads but it isn't a have to item and we can wait one more year; let the County Commission tell us No and then we will have to close them; Chairman Tipton said that if we do that then this same group will be here next year wanting us to do this again for one more year; Michelle also asked if we had to vote on the plan as a whole or could we break it up? Chairman Tipton stated that the motion is for the plan as a whole; Alan Cobble, Principal at West Pines asked to speak-he stated that his teachers cannot go another year like this; he added that he does want the school to stay open but it has been hard on his staff and he does not want to see them to go through this again and if we are only talking about one year at a time, then they will never make it through another year; Michelle Holt added that it would only be for one year; Nathan Brown stated that no matter what happens here tonight, that we must move forward so that we are not back here at some point in time with a different school.

Tom Cobble called question; Chairman Tipton accepted the Motion and asked the Board Secretary for a Roll Call Vote.

Motion Passed *(See voting results above)*

Schools Zones: George Frye spoke about the new schools zones and provided the Board with a map of the new zones for the buses; David McLain noted that after the new schools zones are released parents can still take kids to current school if they provide their own transportation. This will be a work in progress and may change after school; he has called principals, bus drivers and others in before making this recommendation. Moving forward it will need to be looked at further; this is a road map that can be changed; Nathan Brown stated that we are working within the restrictions of our own budget and recommended that the community to stay involved. Mr. McLain stated that we need to vote so that we can start getting letters out to parents as quickly as possible on which school their child will be attending based on the recommended zones.

Motion to Approve Proposed School Zones

Motion: Brian Wilhoit Seconded: Clark Justis

Vote: 7 – 0

Chairman Tipton noted that Mr. McLain had mentioned the idea of the Ed Center moving to Glenwood and asked if we would still have the savings; David McLain said that the savings is still there and the first step would be to vacate the building and that he had met with Jerry Young with TCAT from Morristown who was

interested in using the building to expand their TCAT program; Nathan Brown added that he did not have a problem with voting on this now.

Clark Justis made motion to suspend rules to vote on moving the Ed Center to Glenwood; seconded by Nathan Brown

Vote: 6 - 0 (Cobble was absent from the room during the vote)

Motion to Move Ed Center to Glenwood made by: Nathan Brown; Seconded: by Clark Justis

Vote: 6 - 0 (Cobble was absent from the room during the vote)

Continue to use Glenwood School by Glenwood Ruritan Club

Motion by: Nathan Brown Seconded by Brian Wilhoit

Vote: 6 - 0 (Cobble absent from the room during the vote)

Tom Cobble returned to the meeting.

Mr. McLain stated that, at this point, no plans have been made for the West Pines facility.

V. Announcements

VI. Next Regular Meeting

- Date: Thursday, April 25, 2019
- Time: 4:30 p.m.
- Place: Greene Technology Center

VII. Adjournment: On Motion by Brian Wilhoit, Seconded by Nathan Brown, and with no further business, Chairman Tipton adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.